

and by a worthless promise to join in an international guarantee of the new frontiers.

The Prime Minister was rapturously acclaimed on his return from Munich, bringing, he declared, "peace with honour/* Lord Halifax came nearer to the truth in confessing that the Government had been confronted by a hideous choice of evils. Peace was indeed a boon to a people detesting war, divided in feeling and militarily unprepared. Yet there was another side to the picture. It had been purchased at the expense of a highly civilized democracy, which had fulfilled many of the hopes of its friends and treated its racial minorities better than almost any Continental State, " We have been disgracefully betrayed/* cried Beneš in the bitterness of his heart, as he contrasted the promises with the performances of his friends. Many Englishmen and Frenchmen agreed with him. His resignation symbolized the collapse of his country. The rump of the State was incapable of defending itself, was stripped of most of its industrial resources, and was compelled to feed out of Hitler's hand. The best result of the Munich policy was that we gained time for strengthening our defences, the worst that the obvious disinclination of the western democracies to fight encouraged Hitler to fresh aggressions. British policy from 1931 onwards struck even friendly observers as revealing a certain weariness, exhaustion, lack of will, lack of nerve, as of premature old age. Such a series of failures and humiliations, wrote the American historian Professor Bernadotte Schmidt in his critical sketch, *From Versailles to Mtmich*> was without precedent in British history since the loss of the American colonies.

The Prime Minister announced his opinion that the Munich agreement on the Sudeten problem meant "peace in our time." Among the grounds of his belief was the document signed by Hitler and himself on September 30, 1938, recording their resolve to deal with other questions concerning their countries by the method of consultation and expressing the desire of the two peoples never to go to war with one another again. A second cause of optimism was the Dictator's assurance that he had no more territorial demands in Europe and that his colonial claims were not a matter for war. Lord Halifax seemed rather less confident than his chief. Speaking at